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YANKEE NOTIONS



BY GEORGE S. BRYAN



THE GIFT OF
PRESIDENT
HARLAN HATCHER



YANKEE NOTIONS



YANKEE NOTIONS

BY

GEORGE S. BRYAN

New Haven, Connecticut.

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Stacks)
Gift.
President Milton Eisenhower
12-13-67
463650-291

TO
FRANKLIN P. ADAMS



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AT THE VENDUE

WITH lungs of brass the auctioneer
 Intoned his ritual o'er and o'er:
 "What am I offered? Do I hear
 Three dollars? Good! Who'll make it four?"

Cajoled by his official smirk,
 Bombarded by his heavy wit,
 The crowd bought things that would not work
 And other things that did not fit.

Across the scene a woman strode,
 Complacent, voluble, and spare;
 A hat designed in misses' mode
 Sat coyly on her thin gray hair.

Into the bidding straight she leaped,
 As one who battles with her peers,
 Until there lay about her heaped
 The rubbish of a hundred years.

I heard a grudging neighbor say:
 "Poor thing! She never had a chance
 To spend like she's done here to-day,
 Until her boy was killed in France.

"She's got th' insurance money now,
 An' she an' Lil *will* spread some, won't they?
 When all is said an' done, I vow
Some folks *do* strike it lucky, don't they?"

“THE GIPSILY INCLINED”

“It is an evil age for the gipsily inclined among men.”

An Inland Voyage.

WHEN the gipsy vans went trailing by,
The knot in the store peered out to see,
And the probate justice slapped his thigh:
“A vagabond crew,” said he.

But Ed, the clerk, was of other mind.
“I’ve often thought,” he said, with a smile,
“I should like to leave this job behind,
And just wander the earth for a while.”

The justice still, to any who lingered,
Dealt out his preachment with dismal scorn;
He knew gipsy folk are all light-fingered,
And they lie from the day they are born.

But Ed that night, when his work was done,
From the silent village stole to where
He saw how cheerly the camp-fire shone
On groups in the soft spring air;

Then dreamt, in his four walls’ narrow space,
That he roamed far ways through hills of green—
A foot-free youth of Romany race,
And beloved of a Romany queen.

IN A NEW ENGLAND GARDEN

ABOUT a sun-filled knoll, in hail
 Of the back kitchen-door,
 She dug and set and mulched and trimmed
 For thirty years and more.

It was a tidy garden-spot,
 All stiffly laid by plan;
 The beds were parallelograms
 And straight the footways ran.

It was a decorous garden-spot,
 Sober, discreet, and tame:
 No fulvous lilies lolling there,
 No poppy's ardent flame.

No motley tulips, well-beloved
 Of Omar long ago,
 No roses, redolent of dreams,
 Would in that garden grow.

But pale alyssum, salvia,
 Petunias and sweet peas;
 Quaint little pinks, calendulas—
 Such seemly blooms as these.

I tiptoed round the paths with her;
 She smartly picked a spray
 Of this or that, and, as she talked,
 Wove a hard, tight bouquet.

"The woman here next door will call
 To daughter or to me,
 'Hello, sweetheart!'—she always talks
 So sentimentally.

"Why, all throughout our married life
 I don't suppose I heard
 My husband (he died some years back)
 Ever employ *that* word!"

How strange it seemed! She felt a pride
 That one to her so near
 Had never cared to name her fair
 Or tell her she was dear!

THE ANCHOR

IN the hulk of a broken ship some landsman's fancy sought
 it—

A ship that had ranged the tides with a captain of re-
 nown;

Up from the voice of the sea and the sea's old lure he
 brought it,

And here it rests on the green of a placid inland town.

Once it had known the floor of many a distant ocean,
 Capri's celestial blue and the coral Caribbees;

Once it had stoutly held in many a wild commotion—

Now the cropped turf clings round it under the murmur-
 ing trees.

But yonder hill-bred lad, pausing to look as he passes,
 Can, with the vision of youth, the sea's vast plain behold,
 Or breast the clamorous gale and the waves' engulfing
 masses—
 A shy and obscure Odysseus, whose hazards are never
 told!

EXPERT OPINION

OLD Walt—my reference, let me say,
 Is to no poet good or gray,
 But to the farmhand who each night
 Brought us our milk—Old Walt, the light
 Of his dim lantern holding high,
 Each night would scan with anxious eye
 Our porch thermometer, then stare
 East, west, north, south, or anywhere;
 Seeming, as somehow such folk can,
 Too strangely wise for mortal man.
 “Well, Walter, think it's going to rain?”
 Each night we'd ask, and ask in vain.
 For Walt once more would scrutinize
 Thermometer and vaulted skies,
 Then answer as he turned to go,
 “By Jiminy-Cris'mas, I dunno!” . . .
 He seemed to take a quenchless pride
 In acting as a weather guide.

WELCOME

"Or onward, where the rude Carinthian boor
Against the houseless stranger shuts the door. . . ."

The Traveller.

ACROSS our valley, where the sky
Comes down to meet the hill,
We saw the high, white farmsteads lie
Remote and bright and still.

Girt with their climbing walls they lay,
Flanked by their orchard trees
And haystacks; and for neighbors they
Had sun and stars and breeze.

There, set in upland peace apart,
We knew that we should find
Old-fashioned folk of friendly heart,
Cordial and frank and kind.

And so we climbed by rain-washed ways,
Stopping by sunny brooks
Like those where once we loved to laze
With rods and lines and hooks.

Two frowsy men made no reply
When a "Good day!" we dared;
With doubtful eye, as we went by,
Folk stared and stared and stared.

A beldame at a kitchen pane
Wiped sodden hands and scowled;
A wolfish dog tugged at his chain,
And howled and howled and howled.

INDEPENDENT

GIDEON HOSKINS once laid out the frame
 For a new barn, and mortised it. One day
 Tobias Chase came by and said to Gid,
 "Well, Gid, ye'll hev to change thet frame o' yourn."
 "I guess not, Tobe," says Gid. "Oh, yes, ye will,"
 Tobias answers. "It ain't mortised right.
 Ye'll hev to change it, jest ye mark my words."
 "I guess not, Tobe," says Gid again. With that
 He hammered all the harder. . . . Raising came—
 Then, sure enough, Tobias' words proved true.
 Of course, Gid might have saved much toil and time
 By taking Tobe's advice; but, as he said,
 A Hoskins never gave in to a Chase.

THE HOARD

THE rotted pales hung wryly from the fence;
 The sagging screen-doors, gnawed upon by rust,
 Broke when you touched them; grubs had built their tents
 Across the fanlight, clouded with thick dust.

The storms of years had marked the dingy walls;
 Wasps buzzed displeasure, and from room to room
 Rats scrambled in alarm, with squealing calls.
 Our footfalls woke strange echoes in the gloom.

Old girandoles and sets of Empire chairs
 And cupboards full of books in musty leather
 And mantel ornaments in ugly pairs
 And black-framed prints, bestained by time and weather;

Hearth-furniture of choicest early brass,
 A classic high-boy, a large pie-crust stand,
 A most uncommon triptych looking-glass,
 A curious cabinet, artfully japanned:

Such we saw there, shut up to slow decay;
 And not our prayers nor tears could aught avail
 To coax one precious, envied piece away
 From the lean spinster who said, "Not for sale."

They are not beautiful to her, and she
 Lives in the kitchen, but she still clings fast
 To these few things; to part from them would be
 To own that the world had beaten her at last.

Thought old and feeble, she yet shows the pleasure
 Of proud refusal in her filmy eye;
 Poor though she be, rich is she in a treasure
 Solicitous strangers are too poor to buy.

AUTUMN INTERLUDE

ALL night the trees would keep
 Sighing, and then once more fall hushed;
 As sleepers stir and, ere they wholly wake,
 Turn once again to sleep.

Thin, reeky scuds would take
 Across a ragged moon. When day began to break,
 These fitful shapes, as at a signal, rushed
 Together; and in a start
 The long, chill fingers of the rain
 Came searching at the pane
 Like ghosts of old grief searching at the heart.
 And so that day we bade the sunshine spring
 Forth from its prison in the cloven pine;
 And brought late roses and tendrils gay that cling
 To tumbled walls and round young elm-stocks twine;
 And read of things veracious authors say
 Once happened, long ago and very far away.

AN OLD-SCHOOL PRACTITIONER

YES, what you say is true.
 At times his pony-team
 Would tear past in the dusk—
 Lines wound about the whip,
 He lying helpless there,
 Huddled behind the dash.
 He died in an old shack
 The railway workmen left.
 Yes—all you say is true. . . .
 But he reached down to me—
 Down through the frightened crowd
 Of whispering women—
 Down past the men who took
 Counsel if I should lie

Among my mother's folk
 Or with my father's—down,
 Far down through the dimness,
 And drew me back again—
 Back, back from that dark place
 Where no remembrance is
 And men no more give thanks.
 Then something in me said,
 "Now I shall live." He blew
 Upon my soul until
 Once more it was aflame;
 And while it still may burn,
 I still must speak of him
 With decent gratitude.
 I sometimes wish these words
 Were carved above his grave:

Others he saved—himself he could not save.

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

NOTHING in Grassy Plain appeared greatly altered—
 An upstart cupola perched on the roof of the schoolhouse;
 Some of the barns now had the new-fangled silos
 Standing like donjon-towers, o'er the unkempt farmyards.
 We sighted a fellow moodily digging potatoes,
 Hailed him, and brought him reluctant and dour to the
 fence-rail;
 Then in a vein historico-sentimental
 We told of our youth passed there in his beautiful region:

He shifted his quid and never batted an eyelash.
 Whereat we began to revert to tales of our grandpa—
 Spoke of the good old days now beyond the ramparts
 Of this uneasy planet forever flitted—
 Spoke of their heartier folk and their simpler manners:
 Wooden he stood as the fence on which he was leaning. . . .
 But when we tried to start our obdurate Betsy,
 And Betsy refused (the ignition coil being feeble),
 Then he awoke—then at last we had reached him—
 Had found a *motif* to which his nature responded;
 A lopsided grin illumined his face as he shouted,
 “Now ye’ve got back, ye thought ye’d stay awhile, didn’t
 ye?”

INVALIDED

HE often stood beside his gate,
 An honest-faced old man.
 When days were fair,
 Early and late,
 As I chanced by I’d mark him there—
 Not bent, but tremulous,
 Clasping the pickets; and his eyes would scan
 The railway line. Ever intently thus
 He stood. Sometimes a coaxing Irish smile
 Was turned my way. “Come, rest awhile!”
 He’d call, and beckon with his cane;
 And we would talk as afternoons would wane.
 He told how in the middle night he woke
 And knew his strength had vanished at a stroke,

And how he gave one broken, bitter cry,
 Praying that ere the morning he might die.
 But he had learned to bear it; liked the sun;
 And had not lost his old-time love of fun.
 He had been track-boss, so he said,
 Before his legs were dead,
 With six or eight spry lads to do
 The tasks he bid them to;
 Had lived a hearty life, keeping his section trim;
 In all the years, no man complained of him.
 But, now he was laid by, others would be
 Doing his work—no doubt as well as he;
 All he could do now was, when days were fine,
 To stand there, gazing up and down the line—
 Of what he saw, no longer part. . . .
 Plutarch, I think, advised: "Eat not thy heart."

SPEAKING OF SORGHUM

I RODE, not long ago, with Jason Hart;
 And as we passed a kitchen garden set
 Against a warm and well-drained slope, he turned
 And, pointing with his stubby, ragged whip,
 Said, "Broom-corn—don't see broom-corn often now."
 He slowed his horse still more, that I might look.
 "My father used to raise it for our brooms,
 And Deacon Whitlock made them," Jason said—
 "A year's supply at once, and good ones, too.
 The deacon hailed from Newbridge; tall and lank,
 With a long, corded neck, and cruel lips,

And disapproval in his steel-blue eye.
 My father, fond of horses, often walked
 Beside his team up our ungraded hills,
 Easing the load a bit; and once he bought
 A sulky to run errands with—it held
 A bag of grist, or such light freight as that.
 Seeing my father frankly pleased with this,
 Why, Deacon Whitlock held it was a snare
 Of Satan, and rebuked such sportiveness:
'Some trust in chariots, Brother Hart, and some
In horses, says the Word. Be not like them—
 Trust not in toys, and so forget the Lord!
 And Samuel Chapin, up in Merrick Park
 At Springfield, with the Scriptures on his arm,
 Is not by half so piously severe
 As was the Deacon quoting from the Psalms.
 My father smiled. 'Yes, Elihu,' he said,
 'The Word is full of proof-texts; it says, too:
Bind the chariot to the swift beast. You'll find
 That Micah thus advises.' Whereupon
 The Deacon gave a snort and stalked away.
 For many years he lived to make our brooms
 And buttonhole the hide of his old roan
 That never knew the taste of oats and tugged
 A heavy cart across these endless hills. . . .
 Broom-corn—don't see much broom-corn any more."

TO A TORTOISE

THOU creature of a gargoyle face,
 With twisted feet and clumsy pace—
 Chelonian, let me scan thee well.
 Ah, here's the mark upon thy shell!
 Dost know, thou sullen anchoret,
 He asks if thou art living yet—
 He that incised these symbols so,
 Full half a hundred years ago?
 Time in its passing leaves no line
 On this integument of thine—
 Naught save the characters he made
 To prove the sharpness of his blade;
 But he, the lad that set them there,
 Has wrinkled brow and graying hair.
 To him no more a brand-new knife
 Appears the proudest thing in life;
 He carves no hieroglyphics now
 On patient reptiles such as thou;
 Yet there be instruments less sure,
 Rolls that may not so long endure. . . .
 I'll write to say thou still art found
 Within thine old, accustomed bound—
 That still a link survives in thee
 With his far world of Used-to-Be.

TO CELEBRATE LUCINDA

THIS old spread of white-and-blue
 In its every thread is true;
 Time nor tub had power to fade it,
 Bright of hue as when she made it
 And into its fabric wove
 Her charming name—Lucinda Love.

Samplers all too often bear
 Mottoes of a priggish air;
 Rather stalking-horses they,
 For a maiden's vain display.
 Their prim graces cannot move
 Me like this name—Lucinda Love.

Take my choicest Windsor chair—
 I'll find one just as good, somewhere;
 Claim my Terry mantel clock—
 I'll duplicate its grave tick-tock:
 No other spread, the earth above,
 Was ever signed "Lucinda Love."

Use and beauty here combine;
 Weight and color, warmth and line.
 In her did skill and taste unite
 Who wrought this web of blue-and-white;
 Long dead, whom I know little of
 Save her sweet name—Lucinda Love.

NIGH TO JERICO

"Landscape is a state of mind." *Amiel.*

A GOLDEN fortnight we had come afoot
 Across the Green Hills. We had looked upon
 Willoughby Lake, in all its highland charm;
 And Memphremagog, whose discordant name
 Belies its beauty, linked with Whittier's muse.
 Up breezy tracks we climbed and in dark glens
 We rested, or beside a vocal brook,
 In the warm odors of the evergreens.
 We stood on Mansfield's summit and beheld
 A crumpled world—gigantic parapets
 And headlong scarps—stretched like a giant's dream;
 While, seen afar through that untroubled air,
 Lay shimmering the long glory of Champlain.
 And then, as we drew on toward Jericho,
 A gaffer hailed us from a moss-hung barn,
 Wishing to know what matters called us forth—
 Old Home Week, so he ventured; or perhaps
 A ball play, or a drill at Burlington?
 "No, uncle," some one said, "we're simple chals,
 Just taking in the scenery." With mistrust
 He eyed us and our budgets. "Why," said he,
 "I've druv across these hills fer forty year
 An' "—this with scornful stress—"I never see
 No scen'ry!" And he watched us out of sight.

ACROSS THE FENCE

IT was in May—a rather tardy May—
 That Burkitt took possession. Here and there
 Along the wooded hills the shad-bush hung
 Its foam-like sprays, and maples in the swamps
 Made blurs of rosy mist; the meadows spread
 A bloom of green, and with the mantling grass
 Wind-flowers mingled; by the roadside ditch
 The skunkweed had unrolled its purple shell.
 Thriving young plum-trees wore their close festoons;
 New ivy-leaves upon the house-wall glowed
 As if a fairy brush had burnished them.

At all this Burkitt looked, and found it good.
 For years he had been happy if he caught
 A bit of Maytime in a window-box.

One day (he told me), as he planted shrubs,
 Old Lady Meacham, wearing her pet hat,
 A rusty bonnet trimmed with bugles, paused
 Outside the fence and turned a quizzing eye.
 "A fascinating country," Burkitt said.
 "I guess the country's well enough," replied
 Old Lady Meacham. "Pretty much alike
 All country is. I never had much time
 To look at it. Plaowin' is dretful late.
 Settin' a lot o' stuff aout, ain't ye? Say,
 Ye'll have some bother lookin' after it;
 I wouldn't want the job. My sister, naow,
 Was daffy over jes' sech things as that.
 An' once I says, 'Laws, Phoeb',' I says, 'you cain't

Live on 'em.' An' she says, 'I ain't so sure—
 Not altogether.' She was kind o' queer.
 She had the haouse all full o' posy-pots;
 Wanted the shades up, so them flaowers o' hern
 Could have the sun. After she died, I pitched
 The hull lot aout; I hadn't time to fuss
 With tendin' 'em—besides that, I don't like
 Too much o' sunlight. Allus, when she could,
 Phoeb' used to lug a bunch o' flaowers to church—
 She'd take wild carrots, daisies, anything—
 Claimed that they made it seem more cheerful-like.
 I'm diff'rent; anyway, I don't suppose
 That bein' cheerful 's what folks goes to church fer."

To such intent Old Lady Meacham, who
 Gave much to foreign missionary work;
 Befriended poor young men; was deemed to be
 A splendid nurse; and made boss chicken-pie.

BICENTENARY

TO-DAY the village yields a lively scene.
 The hitching-bars are filled along the green,
 And in the sheds behind the draped town hall
 Unbridled, plushy horses fill each stall.
 From well across the York State line, they say,
 The crowd has flocked to keep this holiday—
 The third and last day of a celebration
 The village holds to honor its foundation.
 This afternoon a pageant will be played;

The morning witnesses a street parade
 With floats and trappings and the Foot Guards band.
 Along the route of march folk take their stand,
 Craning their necks and shuffling with their feet
 And making hackneyed comments on the heat;
 While murmurs rise again and yet again,
 "What are they waiting for? It's half-past ten!"
 "What are we waiting for?"—so query, too,
 Village performers at the rendezvous.
 Among them pouts the comely, conscious maid
 In hoops and frock of treasured silk brocade;
 The stoutish matron with the Gainsborough curl
 And touch of rouge is for to-day a girl;
 With peg-tops, beaver, and plum-colored coat
 A local banker struts. Thus one may note
 How bodied forth in many forms appears
 The story of the hamlet through the years.
 All figures of the past, save one, we scan:
 Where, pray, is he with whom the tale began?
 Old Chris is wanting—Chris, who far and wide
 Plods with his baskets through the countryside;
 Unpacking at back doors his dextrous wares,
 While the uncivil rustic grins and stares
 And bargains (wily soul, he knows full well
 That Yankee shops have none so good to sell!).
 Old Indian Chris, selected to present
 An ancient sachem for this gay event,
 With paint and feathers, tomahawk and bow—
 For him they wait, they seek him high and low;
 But at the last Old Chris has slipped away.
 They seek in vain—he will not march to-day. . . .
 From Redmen once the village founders bought

These ample lands for somewhat less than nought.
 To Redmen commonly three things they gave:
 The white man's Bible, rum, a welcome grave—
 But not the grasp of friendship. In their eyes,
 A Redman was a being to despise
 And dupe—at most, perhaps, to tolerate;
 A creature wedded to his heathen state,
 Who, spite of priestly threats, would still persist
 In not becoming Congregationalist.
 Their plows and harrows, after he had died,
 Without compunction spurned his bones aside.
 Why should Old Chris, then, help to glorify
 Their undistinguished chronicles, and why
 Should Chris go marching in a hot parade
 When he may linger in the tavern's shade?
 Pass on, you paleface show, with flourish pass—
 Leave Chris the shabby solace of his glass!

EDWIN MARCY

"In lucem transitus."

BLIND Edwin Marcy down the dusty road
 Came tapping, weighted with his pedlar's load—
 A well-worn satchel, and an oiled-cloth pack
 Hooked to a harness on his weary back.
 We children knew him, and felt no surprise
 At tinted glasses in the place of eyes.
 His wistful smile had always been the same;

He spoke so kindly; and each time he came
 He brought us cassia buds, of which he had
 An endless store for every lass and lad.
 We had, indeed, such ordinary joys
 As sweets and slung-shots and our Christmas toys;
 But Edwin Marcy was the only one
 Who gave us buds of cassia-cinnamon.
 His shabby bag and shabbier pack were filled
 With many essences that he distilled;
 And not alone from pity housewives bought
 The plain, old-fashioned vials that he brought,
 For all that Edwin Marcy made, they said,
 Was pure as water and as good as bread.

Piecemeal, through what our elders sometimes told,
 We saw the blind man's sorry past unfold.
 We saw his ordered home, the human cheer
 His strength had striven for and his heart held dear.
 We saw him in the stone-pit, bending o'er
 A treacherous fuse—then, with a rumbling roar,
 A storm of ruin shaking all the place—
 Then Edwin Marcy with his sightless face.
 We saw a wife desert a true wife's post,
 To love a traitor when love's need was most.
 We saw a blind man vowing that so long
 As legs might serve him and his back be strong,
 A girl and boy, their mother's care denied,
 Should never lack for what he could provide.
 We saw him saving, day by patient day,
 To place a humble headstone where they lay.
 We saw a wounded trust—a broken dream—
 The thread of life following a grievous seam.

Still Edwin Marcy groped the long, blank miles,
 With gentle voice, kind thoughts, and wistful smiles.
 And when he entered at a friendly door
 To spread his wares upon the kitchen floor,
 A gracious fragrance through the house was spent
 That soothed the heart and lingered when he went—
 A subtle perfume that contained no hint
 Of clove or coumarin or peppermint.
 It lingers yet, making one feel he must
 Be right who said the actions of the just
 Smell sweet and blossom when themselves are dust.

AT THE WHIPPING-POST

BEFORE the Elmsford meeting-house
 A whipping-post was set;
 Around it on a cheerful morn
 The countryside was met.
 They left their wonted chores undone,
 They came from miles away;
 A fellow-man of Elmsford town
 Was to be whipped that day.

 At stated worship with the saints
 For more than three months' space,
 This fellow, in despite of law,
 Not once had shown his face.
 Most of the saints had little cared
 Whether he lived or died,
 But now they came with happy zest
 To see the lash applied.

The culprit to the post was bound,
 Uplifted was the thong—
 When suddenly a horseman rode
 Among the gazing throng.
 Unknown to them the high gray horse,
 Unknown the rider, too;
 The rider reined his horse and asked,
 "What are ye here to do?"

Up stepped the solemn constable;
 The law he justified.
 The stranger in his stirrups rose.
 "Ye Elmsford folk," he cried—
 "Vain zealots who suppose ye now
 Are serving Heaven so well—
 When sinful pride is thus your guide,
 Are rather serving Hell!"

"Think ye to force men to the ranks
 By fine and stocks and rod?
 Into men's hearts shall men thus seek
 To whip the grace of God?
 A brother ye can never win
 By flogging or by fears;
 With force and craft men press and draft—
 Heaven calls for volunteers!"

He turned his horse's head about
 And vanished as a ghost;
 They bade the constable unbind
 The culprit from the post.

And as the crowd went slowly home,
 A voice was heard to say:
 "Lo, with the Lord's own scourge of cords
 Were we rebuked this day."

ORACLE

BULKLEY, of Colchester town, stretched, yawned, and
 sighed;
 Folded the foolscap sheets, to each applied
 Its wafers; then he rose and crossed the room
 And looked out on his apple trees in bloom.
 "The church in Hebron, like these orchard trees,
 May yet bear precious fruit if Heaven but please,"
 He mused. "I pray her promise be not lost
 Through fatal tempest or untimely frost.
 Sometimes my head is sick, my whole heart faints
 O'er this unceasing strife among the saints.
 It must be meant that in another sphere
 Peacemakers shall be blest—not now or here."
 And then John Bulkley, having nibbed anew
 His pen, with flourish snarled and curlicue
 Directed his two letters.

In due course
 The Hebron church folk were convened in force
 To hear the awaited words of counsel read.
 "My brethren all," the moderator said,
 "Our reverend adviser writes: *Repair*
Your fences now, and take especial care
Of the old black bull. These words of his appear

Of mystic purport, very far from clear.
 I therefore call on any who may choose
 To give a full expression of their views."
 At last a member said: "My friends, indeed
 This seems to me the advice that most we need.
Repair your fences means we should take heed
 Whom we admit and in our number hold—
 Strange cattle have brought discord to the fold.
The old black bull most plainly signifies
 The Devil; and so we, my friends, if wise,
 Against that ancient enemy shall set
 A double guard, that he may never get
 Rampant again among us." Then a hum
 Of approbation hailed this Daniel come
 To judgment. It was voted that they try
 The Bulkley plan; and ere a month went by,
 The Hebron church, to harmony restored,
 Blessed sage John Bulkley's name and praised the
 Lord. . . .

But on a distant farm in Colchester town,
 John Bulkley's tenant with a puzzled frown
 Conned o'er a lengthy missive—and in vain;
 Grumbling, "Why should he write in this here strain?
 There's somethin' loose in Dom'nie Bulkley's brain!"

JOHN 7, 34

Among forgotten Yankee legends, one
Is of the Reverend Joseph Huntington.
If byssus, amber, myrrh, and nard were mine,
Then might I fittingly therewith enshrine
The gentle memory of this old divine.
"Pattern of learning" long ago was he
Among the churches round confessed to be;
"Example of extensive charity"—
So did they epitaph him when he died,
With many words of eulogy beside.
('Tis said that certain stricter brethren found
His views of Hell were not precisely sound.)
His mighty homilies are all forgot,
And not a soul now cares a single jot
If he was truly orthodox or not;
Naught save its linkage to a greater fame
Preserves the casual mention of his name.
For in the roomy manse that rises still,
Though altered since his day, on Coventry hill,
Through Sallust's "Wars" or Vergil's epic tale
The worthy pastor led young Nathan Hale;
Turning, one fancies, from the stately text
Sometimes, to speak of how the land was vexed;
And how, in evil days, who loved that land,
Having done all, would in whole armor stand. . . .
One day a stranger reached the manse's door,
So oft swung wide to needy ones before;
Himself a member of the cloth declared,
Who thus to friends in Massachusetts fared;
Pictured his many miseries; and, in brief,

Besought of Parson Huntington relief.
 "'Tis Saturday," the prudent parson said.
 "Then o'er the Lord's Day, brother, take a bed,
 Sit by our hearth, and break with us our bread."
 (In those far times the constables would frown
 On Sunday traveling from town to town.)
 The stranger, yielding, straightway spoke at large:
 In Susquehanna's vale had been his charge;
 All his possessions were abruptly laid
 In utter ruin by an Indian raid;
 He had escaped the tomahawk through flight,
 And, much afflicted in his sudden plight,
 Had thus far made his way as best he might.
 The kindly dominie, now much impressed,
 Was doubly gracious to his cleric guest,
 Inviting him the sacred desk to adorn
 And preach the sermon of the morrow morn.
 "'Twould ill become me in the garb I wear
 To do so much as make the shorter prayer,"
 Replied the stranger. "Pray you, have no fear
 Upon that score, for I have garments here,"
 The pastor said, "not long since made for me,
 But never worn. They'll suit you to a T."
 The clothes were quickly brought, as quickly tried—
 "A signal fit!" the host, admiring, cried.
 The stranger voiced both gratitude and pride;
 Then forthwith said: "If I do not presume,
 My generous friend, permit that to my room
 I may for meditation soon retire."
 "By all means, sir." Pen, paper, ink, and fire
 Were punctually supplied. "And should I keep
 Late vigil, will that interrupt your sleep?"

"Nay, sir, now *you* shall toil and *I* shall rest,"
The parson said; and both smiled o'er the jest.

Betimes next day the household was astir.
The parson, with a loud "Good morning, sir!"
Rapped vigorously upon the guestroom door.
No answer—and he listened for a snore,
Then stepped within, and in a startled stare
Perceived the stranger was no longer there.
Some shabby raiment, tossed upon a chair,
Remained—and also, on the mantel spread,
A sheet of sermon paper, at whose head
In bold, round script these lines the parson read:
"The text I give to those I leave behind me,
Is: 'Ye shall seek me, and ye shall not find me;
And where I am, thither ye cannot come.'—
John 7, 34." A moment dumb
The good man stood; then, with a hearty peal
Of laughter, hastened to his morning meal.

THE "DARK DAY"

Hartford, May 19, 1780.

THE climbing sun was shrouded o'er,
That awesome morn of spring;
Fowl quickly sought their roost once more,
And birds refused to sing.

A silence fell on field and town;
 Men put their quills away,
 And laid their spades and hammers down
 And spoke of Judgment Day.

Upon the Council crept a dread,
 There in its hall of state:
 "I move we now adjourn," one said,
 "Ere it may prove too late."

Cried Davenport, "Nay, if it be
 That my last hour draws near,
 I shall not from my duty flee—
 And duty's post is here!

"I call for lights!" . . . Whereat apace
 The lights were brought, and shone
 Upon a Council in its place,
 For not a man had gone.

TO NEW ENGLAND

"Thus times do shift,—each thing his turn does hold. . . ." *Herrick.*

ACROSS your marches now strange races crowd;
 Your many-windowed factories they fill,
 The acres of your rock-walled farms they till,
 And in your streets their voices cry aloud.
 They reckon not of so much that made you proud;
 They know not Lexington nor Bunker's Hill;
 They tread not in your ways, and never will;

At other shrines than yours their heads are bowed.
 While, from their hunting-grounds beyond the West,
 Philip and Sassacus and all the tribes
 That once you burned and slew and dispossessed
 And sold to slavery, make at you their gibes:
 "Speak, Yaunghees, from your Bible can you tell
 Which now are Canaanites, which Israel?"

THE CLEMENTI

DAPPLES of sunlight waver to and fro
 Across the battered file of yellow keys
 That made response with tinkling melodies
 When Charlotte played, a hundred years ago.
 Six fluted legs, brass mounts, one pedal—so
 Clementi made it; and across the seas
 The young sea-captain brought it, just to please
 His Charlotte—guileful and designing beau!
 Long stilled the music of her lissom fingers,
 Long hushed his voice that boomed sonorous bass;
 Yet, as the waning sunshine gently lingers
 Amid tall elms that grow as then they grew,
 Faint echoes hover in this silent place—
 Ghosts of quaint tunes that once those lovers knew.

SENTENCED

I SAT there in that ghastly waiting-room—
 Contrived, it seemed, to enervate and appall.
 On awkward chairs ranged stiffly round a wall
 Papered with noxious flowers in nauseous bloom,
 There we all sat in meditative gloom,
 Or turned the pages of old magazines
 That had been old when I was in my teens
 And still lived on, untouched by common doom.
 And then the office-door, slid stickily back,
 Let forth a girl that looked not left or right:
 From her all hope had suddenly been robbed,
 For her the world had suddenly gone black;
 She walked as one who walks in sleep at night;
 I saw her shoulders heaving as she sobbed.

ON A BYROAD

HIGH up on Indian Mountain, where the land
 Spreads out in fertile loam a wide plateau,
 Aspirant farmers settled long ago.
 There, in the eye of all of the winds, yet stand
 Their crumbling houses, and on either hand
 Stretch unkempt meadows men no longer mow.
 Sumach and scrub-oaks now in riot grow
 About the fields whence they of yore were banned.
 There the old church is. Broken beneath the weight
 Of many snows, its horse-shed roof lies prone;

Its paint is gone, its belfry far from straight,
 And moss is growing on its doorstep stone.
 The door, once locked save when there was a meeting,
 Droops evermore ajar in useless greeting.

THE CARDINAL-FLOWER

O'ER the dark woodland pool Lobelia hung—
 A burning spot amid a world of shade;
 And the dim surface with her flame she made
 Kin to that sea the man of Patmos sung,
 Mingled with fire. Each brilliant, cloven tongue
 Found a reflection; the undistinguished glade
 Shone with a twofold brightness, and each blade
 And spire took beauty from the gleam she flung.
 Upon that sanguine bloom who still may chance
 Nor know some portion of their first surprise
 Who greeted it and sent it home to France
 To show what marvels grew beyond the seas—
 Know, too, that spite of silks and precious dyes,
 Richelieu was not arrayed like one of these?

A SUMMER-NIGHT SHOWER

BEHIND the westward hills the thunder mumbling,
 A heavy hush upon the unmoved trees—
 A suffocating hush that seems to seize
 And choke one; then the thunder's closer grumbling,

Somebody with a stubborn window fumbling,
 A sudden puff of monitory breeze,
 Sharp slaps of raindrops; and right after these
 The fiery uproar of the storm comes tumbling.
 Now lights are lit, and all the house awakes,
 And prowling feet pass up and down the halls;
 The rooted earth beneath the onset shakes,
 Down with a crash a blighted chestnut falls,
 And far away upon a lonely height
 A burning barn flares up against the night.

TENTH MONTH

ALONG the changing hills an ashen haze
 That half dissembles change, and on the stream
 Slow argosies of leaves that in a dream
 Move with the dreaming tide; high clouds that laze
 Across a pale-blue sky; a brushfire blaze
 Grown emulous of the sumach's scarlet gleam;
 Nights that a web of mist and moonlight seem,
 Drawn o'er the mellow brilliance of the days:
 Tokens of our October, these. We smell
 The homely savor of the ground, we taste
 The honey of grapes, we see the pumpkins spread
 Like great, gold apples; hear the flippant yell
 Of crows; acclaim the glory of trees laid waste,
 And crush dead hearts of flowers beneath our tread.

TWILIGHT: EARLY MARCH

SHADOWS of misty heliotrope,
 As the brute wind began to fail,
 Crawled down along the drift-lined slope
 And rested on the frozen swale.

I looked and saw an eldritch band
 Joined in a wild macaber-dance;
 In huddles o'er the snowy land
 Some would retire and some advance.

Their backs were bent, their torn hair blew,
 Their ragged mantles were outspread;
 One here and there among the crew
 Waved a gaunt arm or tossed a head.

I looked once more—and who were those
 Here in this icy desert lost,
 Contorted in their final throes
 And rigid with eternal frost?

Some like fantastic mummies slept
 As when, resigned, they sank to die;
 Some had, as death upon them crept,
 Stood and with curses faced the sky.

Again I looked; shocks of rich corn,
 Propitious autumn's useful yield,
 Unhusked and mouldery and forlorn,
 Were strewn about the winter field.

The sheaves by wrangling winds were beat;
 Among them, lean mice found a lair;
 Squirrels explored on scudding feet,
 And crows came unmolested there.

Shadows of misty heliotrope,
 As the brute wind began to fail,
 Crawled down along the drift-lined slope
 And rested on the frozen swale.

THE WATERING TROUGH

A NEIGHBOR hollowed out a tree,
 A simple trough he made;
 Beside the road beneath the hill
 He set it in the shade.

He led a shining runnel down,
 That rustic trough to fill,
 And there the wearied horses drank
 Beneath the shady hill.

There, too, the traveler cupped a hand
 To catch the runnel's flow,
 And in the cool a moment paused
 Before he turned to go.

Where ran the old dirt pike men laid
 A wide highroad one day;
 They felled the trees, they changed the stream,
 They took the trough away.

I like the broad, firm way they built,
 Yet also fancy still
 That shade-hung place where one might rest
 Before he climbed the hill.

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

As narrated by "One Who Was There."

AUNT NORTHPROP was one o' the sort that it's said of:
 "She's an awful hard woman t' git ahead of."
 Try once t' set on her, ye'd hop up agin
 As if ye'd been stuck in the back with a pin;
 If ye wanted t' beat her—say, never fear,
 Ye'd need "daylight savin' " twelve months o' the
 year. . . .

When I was a youngster, I recollect' well,
 Th' Baptis' Church hed a big *revival* spell,
 An' th' feller they hed a-leadin' 'em there
 Was strong at exhortin' an' gifted in prayer;
 Whutever he'd say er whutever he'd dew,
 He jest seemed t' lift ye right aout o' yer pew.
 When 't come t' religion, Aunt Northrop *was* prouid—
 Nobuddy cud tech her at hollerin' laoud.
 Say, when she was younger she sure must ha' be'n
 A wonder at shaoutin' aout, "Glory! Amen!"
 Th' elder kep' coxin' her an' entreatin':
 "Will th' sister be calm?" he kep' repeatin'.
 No use: Ol' Aunt Northrop she jest set her face

An' went on bawlin' up t' th' Throne o' Grace.
 Then one night th' elder stopped suddenly short:
 "Although I dislike very much to resort
 To a measure like this, I yet have no choice;
 The sister refuses to temper her voice.
 Brothers Warner and Todd I appoint, therefore,
 To escort Sister Northrop as far as the door."
 Wal, Aunt Northrop she tried t' put up a fight;
 She scratched 'em an' kicked 'em with all of her might.
 But up on their shoulders Aunt Northrop they got,
 Both lookin' as if they hed sooner be shot—
 An' so they wud, too, I guess, ruther than not.
 Then above all th' shindy I heerd her words:
 "Mine is far greater honor than was my Lord's!
One jackass, says Scriptur', t' bear Him wud dew,
 But I'm signally favored in havin' *tew!*"
 She fetched it aout so, that I recollect' well
 Us boys in th' gal'ry jest set up a yell. . . .

CONTINGENT

SOME half a dozen times or so, at least,
 Lem Taylor promised Parson Stone a pig
 In great good will, declaring that the beast
 Was fat as a seal and lively as a grig.

 But no pig came; so Parson Stone at last
 Called from his garden when he chanced to see
 Lem's long-familiar bays go jogging past:
 "Lem Taylor, where's that shote you promised me?"

“Whoa!” Lem said. “Whoa!”—and then he cleared his throat,
 And looked at Parson Stone, and thought a spell.
 “I guess,” he said, “I did speak of a shote;
 But since then, Dominie, the shote got well!”

THE YARN OF ASA KENNEY AND THE BULL’S BAD BULL

EVER hear of Asa Kenney?
 I’ll bet a brand-new penny
 Few of you, if any,
 Ever did—
 That’s what I’ll bet;
 And yet
 Asa Kenney, though the years have hid
 His honest name,
 May lay claim to fame.

It was a summer’s morning
 A hundred and a score
 Of years ago, says legend—
 Perhaps a little more.
 The grass was on the ground,
 The dew was on the grass;
 The sun was on the dew
 And made it gleam like glass.

Then forth went Asa Kenney
 And wandered o’er the field,

To view his crops a-growing
 And figure up the yield.
 The grass was on the ground,
 A bull was in the grass;
 The bull raised up his head
 On seeing Asa pass.

It was a summer's morning—
 The bull ignored it quite;
 He charged on Asa Kenney
 With tauromachic might.
 The bull was on the ground,
 Asa was in the air;
 Pardon—for a minute
 We'll have to leave him there.

When Asa rose,
 What sentiment in him, do you suppose,
 Was uppermost? Religion, do you say?
 Did Asa pray?
 Nay, nay!
 Or was it anger, then,
 Such as oft visits harried men?
 You're wrong again!
 No sooner was he started on his flight,
 Than he began to study how he might
 Reap benefit therefrom. A way he found,
 And cried, "Eureka!" as he hit the ground. . . .

Not many days thereafter,
 The bull was in the grass,
 But on his horns were fastened
 Two solid knobs of brass.

Orders soon swamped Asa,
 His coffers soon were full;
 The grass was on the ground;
 The joke was on the bull.

Now o'er the broad earth's surface,
 Wherever men might trade,
 You'd see on fractious cattle
 The knobs that Kenney made.
 The lark was on the wing,
 The snail was on the thorn;
 The horn was on the critter,
 The knob was on the horn.

Sometimes, in his herbivorous way,
 That bull in later years was heard to say:
 "Chin whiskers and a Scripture name—
 I might have known
 Enough to leave the same
 Alone."

MISS BEULAH MORSE SPEAKS

It was on Wednesday, just at dinner-time
 (I had corn fritters and a nice round steak),
 When he came over and I heard the thing:
 I always know them by the sound they make.
 I rushed outdoors—well, say, it didn't take
 Me long—and right above the big elm-tree
 I saw the machine as plain as plain could be!

Straight up the valley was the way he went,
 On toward New Milford, steady as a string;
 He took the State road as a mark, I guess.

Just like a hawk that never flaps a wing,
 He sailed and sailed. I could hear the engine sing
 Till the machine became a tiny dot
 That sometimes seemed to be there, sometimes not.

They say some folks in Salisbury saw him drop—
 Above Bear Mountain, too, or so I hear.
 They sent out parties searching all the woods;
 But it's wild country, with no houses near,
 And hard to get through at this time of year.
 They'll not have much except a wild-goose chase,
 A-hunting for him in that awful place!

They had a flyer at the Danbury Fair
 That took folks up at so much for the ride.
 My nephew urged me to go up; and I said,
 "No, sir," I said, "you'll not get me inside
 One of those things. Our family all have died
 Respectably, not like a holy show,
 On top of a hill, with some one they didn't know!"

A MODERN LOCHINVAR

"You see, Granduncle lived in Columbus, Ohio."

GRANDUNCLE used to beau, he said,
 A prim New England girl;
 Her hair was flattened to her head,
 Without a wave or curl;
 Her poplin frock was so severe
 That none, you may be sure,
 Would ever guess the little dear
 Had quite a *bonne tournure*.

He said a chill about him closed
 Within her parlor door.
 Upon a walnut stand reposed
 The works of Hannah More;
 A dismal vase exposed to view
 A posy of dried grass;
 Wax flowers of a sickly hue
 Pined in their house of glass.

A cold black-marble mantelpiece
 O'ertopped a chilly grate;
 Straight haircloth chairs, like dumb police,
 Stood round the walls in state;
 And hanging by a velvet cord,
 In a vast walnut frame,
 Was Infant Samuel when the Lord
 Was calling him by name.

If things moved with uncommon verve,
 At just half-after-eight
 A pippin cold as ice she'd serve
 Upon a frosty plate.
 The family at the stroke of nine
 Would punctually appear
 And range itself in solemn line
 For solemn Christian cheer.

Yet something drew him thither still
 (Or so he used to say),
 And from the parlor's deadly chill
 He bore the maid away.
 "Of all the gals that bards have sung,
 New England gals are best,"
 He always said—"but pick 'em young
 And take 'em further west!"

A BISSEXTILE ADVENTURE

"**S**AY, this must be leap year, ain't it?" said Phinney Platt
 to me.

I nodded. "Well, I've safely crossed the danger line," said
 he.

"Although you might not think *I'd* be a victim of its tricks,
 There *was* a time when leap year nearly got me in a fix.

That was the time when 'Cretia Gale dropped me a line to
 say

A big dance would be given, Thursday next, down Fairfield
 way.

Now, I don't say that 'Cretia wasn't right and nice and fine;
Yet most of us have choices, and—well—'Cretia wasn't
mine.

But her folks were friends of my folks; I hated to say, No;
And so I wrote and told her that I should be pleased to go.
To make a lengthy story short, we reached the dance all
right.

(It was a cold December, and the snow lay deep and white.)
We danced, we had an old-time spread, and then we danced
some more;

It was well into Friday when at last we left the floor.
As I turned the mare's head homeward, I had a sudden
thought:

'Phinney, this year is leap year, and to-night's the night
you're caught.'

I can't tell how I knew it, but perhaps you can surmise—
Through a catch in 'Cretia's voice and through something in
her eyes,

By something in her manner, by her touch upon my sleeve,
I knew I must forestall her or perhaps I'd live to grieve.
Now, I had trained that mare when she was nothing but a
colt,

And at a certain chirrup she would seize the bit—and bolt.
At once I made the magic sound, and, with a sudden lift,
The mare shot out—and 'Cretia shot head foremost in a
drift.

I found I couldn't stop the mare, now she had once cut
loose—

All strength was vain, all soothing words were not a bit of
use.

The cutter plowed through banks of snow as clippers cleave
the foam;

Not once that nag paused till she reached the driveway gate
at home.

When I went round to 'Cretia's house and undertook to explain,

'Please, Mr. Platt,' said 'Cretia, 'never speak to me again.'
And after that, when leap year came, I always used to flee;
But now I've crossed the danger line," said Phinney Platt to me.

THE DEACON AND THE SHARPER

DEACON LYMAN of Lyme
Is the theme of my rhyme—
A man of no little repute in his time.
Having followed the sea
For a score of years, he
Then took to the land when approaching his prime.

He declared it was true,
All his active life through,
That Heaven had informed him just what he should do—
What crop he should try,
Or what horse he should buy;
And even in love it directed him, too.

When he wooed Betty Lee,
"Mistress Betty," spoke he,
"The will of the Lord is that we are to wed."
"To His will I resign
Any scruples of mine.
If you're sure, I can stand it," was all Betty said.

Once the deacon averred
 He had had divine word
 To give to the poor all the cows in his herd—
 Bess, Brindle, or Nancy,
 As suited one's fancy;
 And new-milch or farrow, whichever preferred.

So day after day
 (It is needless to say)
 Came applicants thither in motley array;
 From most of the county
 Folk sought for the bounty,
 And the pick of the cows were soon driven away.

A sharper of Preston
 Said, "I'll git the best on
 This fool of a deacon, withaout bein' guessed on.
 If they's caows goin' free,
 Well—one's comin' to me,"
 He bragged, as he started his fraudulent quest on.

To the deacon he went,
 Saying, "Deacon, I'm sent
 By the Lord to declare to ye, sir, His intent.
 Ye're to give me right naow
 A tiptop new milch caow;
 An' He's pledged to repay ye for all thet ye've lent."

Said the deacon, "It's queer
 That the Lord sent you here.
 'Twas the Father of Lies who misled you, I fear.
 For the ones that I've got,
 That are left of the lot,

Are two mean-looking runts that ain't calved for a year.
 Though guided by Heaven-sent messages, I'm
 No miracle-worker," quoth Lyman of Lyme.

A TARDY DEFENSE OF Y^E DEACON

NEW YEAR'S EVE of seventeen-eighty
 (Thus unimpeached traditions tell),
 As Deacon Davies came home late, he
 Plunged like a plummet down his well—
 How, is not said; at any rate, he
 Uttered a blood-congealing yell.

From all directions rushed the neighbors,
 Roused by that sudden, sharp halloo;
 With axes, squirrel guns, and sabers,
 With ropes and lanterns, swift they flew.
 Thanks to their expeditious labors,
 The Deacon rose ere long to view.

He said he'd been to Watch-Night Meeting
 Before his mishap came to pass—
 A dictum that needs no repeating
 Is, *In profundo veritas*.
 Fie on their flout, "Who did the treating?"—
 Fie on their cachinnations crass!

HOW BILL WENT EAST

A Legend of the Argonauts.

'T WAS out in California in the days of Forty-Nine,
Two Yankee men were partners in the Dolly Varden mine;
And Jim was right as ninepence, but poor Bill began to pine.
(This is gospel, friends, I'm telling you.)

When Bill had grown so feeble that he'd taken to his bed,
One day he called Jim to him and "Good-by, Old Pard," he
said;
"You'll have to plant me far from home"—and then his
spirit fled.
(And Jim felt powerful lonely.)

Jim pondered on Bill's words, and then at last, "By Time,"
said he,
"Bill was the squarest partner that I ever hope to see.
I'll plant him back in Yankeeland—that's where he wants
to be."
(That showed some feeling, didn't it?)

Jim tried to send Bill homewards on a Yankee sailing-ship;
With Bill aboard, the sailors said they wouldn't make the
trip;
The purser wouldn't purse a bit, the skipper wouldn't skip.
(A superstitious lot, they were.)

But Jim was nothing daunted, and a sturdy cask he found.
He put Old Bill inside it, and packed seaweed all around;
And soon Old Bill in this disguise for Yankeeland was
bound.
(This may sound fishy, but it isn't.)

That sailing-ship beat round the Horn, through storms that
crossed her way;
She made her port in Yankeeland, though after long delay;
And so Jim's cask in safety reached Bill's relatives one day.
(Quite a journey for Bill, too.)

On that very day Aunt Hetty gained the age of eighty-three.
Her neighbors were assembled there to hold a jamboree;
They wondered what the contents of the battered cask might
be.

("I'm so *curious*," remarked one lady.)

Dear Auntie Hetty only beamed on each inquiring guest.
"I think," she said, "it's something from my nephew in the
West;

He used to tell of all his aunts he liked Aunt Het the best."

("Such vanity—at *her* age!" whispered another lady.)

They stood and speculated as to what the cask might hold;
It hefted rather heavy, yet it seemed too light for gold;
Then, "Open it," said Auntie, and they did as they were
told.

("A lot of pesky seaweed," complained one man.)

And there sat Bill inside it, just as lifelike as you please,
Excepting that his whiskers hung a foot below his knees.
"I swan!" cried Auntie Hetty. "Will was always such a
tease!"

(She didn't faint, or anything.)

Thereafter, Auntie Hetty, since she deemed the jest so good,
 Rehearsed with many details, almost any time she could,
 How once, upon her birthday, she drew William from the
 wood. . . .

(That was Yankee humor, folks.)

JULY 4, 1862

THE springing breeze brought in to me
 A breath of May, a tang of sea,
 Wafting my wits away, I fear,
 From Kent and Blackstone and Bouvier;
 And then the formal message came,
 Signed with an old-time neighbor's name:
 Would I not be, he wrote to say,
 Their speaker, Independence Day?
 For twenty dollars? Brethren, yea!
 So, honored in my native land,
 I rode in pomp behind the band;
 And o'er the hills where once he flew
 I made the old eagle scream anew.
 On benches ranged among the pines
 Goshen folk sat in serious lines,
 While with great palm-leaf fans they beat
 Against the slow torpor of the heat.
 Closing, our year of doubtful war
 I viewed; then looked with hope before.
 "God grant," said I, "the slave be free!
 Yet if not, still this flag must be
 The flag of Union—at the cry

Of 'Union' still we choose to die!"
 Or somewhat thus; for my eager youth
 Looked through Abe Lincoln's eyes at truth.
 I ceased. . . . Hot anger in his face,
 Father stood shouting in his place—
 I saw him through a kind of mist,
 The unbending Abolitionist.
 "Who could predict"—these words I caught—
 "That I to such pass should be brought,
 That my gray hairs would know this shame,
 That a young wretch would here proclaim
 Such brutal sentiments, and dare
 In Goshen town my name to bear?"
 He glared about, but none replied;
 In the bewildered stir, I spied
 My mother, and I gained her side.
 "Henry," she sobbed, "good-by—you will
 Just make the train at Wolcottville."
 I came away then. . . . I pledged my breath
 To keep that Covenant with Death.
 In three months more I lay in bed,
 With pillows heaped beneath my head,
 Listening to what they said was best
 For certain bullets in my chest,
 When curiously it flashed on me
 I had come away without my fee!

ANATHEMA

AFTER a week of rain (Miss Martha said),
 The Lord's Day sun at last broke steaming through;
 Mounds of white cloud were ranged close overhead,
 Like marble pylons set to guard the blue;
 Old elms confided, in their stately way,
 "Martha, you know, will be baptized to-day."

Martha had somehow reached the age of five
 Undedicate (she has not told me why);
 And though she seemed, indeed, to grow and thrive,
 What might not happen should she chance to die?
 Therefore she moved, that day, with happy feet
 And eyes that saw not, down the village street.

So rapt she was, she did not mark at all
 The muddy pool that lay across her path. . . .
 A sudden stumble and a swift, headlong fall—
 The voice of woe, and then the voice of wrath. . . .
 O Lord's Day sun that was eclipsed so soon!
 O shining morn that knew such dismal noon!

Her starched white frock was grievous to behold;
 Face, hands, and shoes a common mishap shared.
 Out rushed the words in which her doom was told,
 Her dole proclaimed, her punishment declared,
 And all the fair cargo of her dream capsized:
"You little slut, now you sha'n't be baptized!"

A BALLAD OF DAME DISBROW

ANNO 1692

STAND forth, Mercy Disbrow,
 Give thou good heed
 And attend well the charge
 That the clerk will now read.

Know, Mercy Disbrow,
 Thus the charge lies:
 Thou hadst not the fear of God
 Clear in thine eyes.

With God's arch-enemy
 Thou dost consort,
 Against the King's peace
 And the Colony's court.

Thou hast by Satan's aid
 Wrought much of late
 To harm the King's subjects
 In body and estate.

By God's law and Crown law
 The charge thus doth lie;
 By Crown law and God's law
 Thou dost best to die.

Speak, then, Edward Jèsup,
 What hast thou to say?
 At Thomas Disbrow's house
 I dined on a day.

I saw a pig roasting,
 All brown and well done;
 When to table it came,
 Of skin it had none.

Yet when Thomas Disbrow
 Carved the pig, then
 The skin, to my vision,
 Grew on it again.

Dame Mercy Disbrow
 Brought the Scriptures to me;
 The pages I turned,
 No word could I see.

The book Mercy Disbrow
 Seized, and behold,
 The print, to my vision,
 Stood suddenly bold.

Setting out by the Cove,
 I labored to row;
 Though the waters seemed high,
 At once they fell low.

So must I walk home;
 And, losing the way,
 In the marshes I floundered
 Until it was day.

Speak thou, Jacob Griswold,
 And make a report
 Of what thou hast seen
 To the Colony's court.

I saw Mercy Disbrow
 Bound foot and hand,
 Yet she swam like a cork
 And came safely to land.

Thou hast heard, Mercy Disbrow:
 Thus doth the charge lie;
 By Crown law and God's law
 Thou dost best to die.

Thou hast heard, Mercy Disbrow,
 What true men have said;
 By thy neck shalt thou hang
 Until thou art dead.

Thus shall we mete justice
 To all of thy sort,
 Foes of God and the King
 And the Colony's court.

To all of thy kind
 Thus right shall we mete,
 And we shall bruise Satan
 Under our feet.

HYLIDS

HARK, now that day is done,
 To this shrill unison
 Piercing the dusk; night long
 Echoes the strident song.

Whence are these myriad cries
 Under the evening skies—
 Have budding trees a voice?
 Does the young grass rejoice?
 Surely such notes as these
 Rise not from grass nor trees!
 Or are they festal sprites
 That through dim April nights
 Dance in a round and sing
 Hail to returning spring?
 If you but tiptoe near,
 Rumors of sudden fear
 Still them at once, and they
 Cease till you turn away;
 Then into mirth they break—
 What a high din they make!

ANTIQUARIAN QUERIES

A_H, yes, he lodged here once, they say,
 The Marquis Lafayette.
 He tarried for a night and day,
 And dined and danced and went away;
 Precisely when this happened, they
 Seem wholly to forget.

Was he nineteen or sixty-odd,
 The famous *Général*?
 When the old ballroom's floor he trod,

How was he clothed? one asks, how shod?
 Alas, the local Homers nod—
 They do not know at all.

Was it in peace, or in the din
 And violence of war?
 And was he sprightly, lithe, and thin,
 Or dozy, with a double chin?
 The legends end as they begin,
 And tell one nothing more.

The beaux of silver-buckled knee,
 The belles of yesteryear,
 We cannot question now, and we
 Need not to question; for, you see,
 He never came, *le cher Marquis*,
 Within two leagues of here.

THE PINE

THE axeman passed you by
 And age has spared you still,
 Pinnacled darkly against the sky
 Upon your westward hill.

Athwart the sunset's flare,
 High and serene, you stand,
 Topping your lonely summit there
 Above the meadow-land.

So might an ancient tower
 Rise in its lofty place,
 A witness to the vanished power
 Of some forgotten race.

Never may crawling greed
 From out the valley climb
 And on your living glory feed
 Before your destined time;

But may a vast wind smite
 Your head, if fall you must,
 And kindly seasons in their flight
 Blend your great heart with dust.

OLD ROADS

If you turn west from the sunken river,
 And toil through the trees up the mountainside,
 You will come upon traces of old roads, fashioned
 By folk that long ago lived and died.

Here are the stones of their leaf-choked sluiceways,
 And here are the tracks that their wheels have worn,
 And the broken spans of their rotted bridges
 Amid a tangle of weed and thorn:

They wind on, these roads, past roof-trees fallen;
 Past cairnlike chimneys, forsaken and cold;
 Past unpruned orchards where yet in August
 The harvest apples hang out their gold.

Where by these roads now the tireless fowler,
 Seeking for grouse, through the thickets may stray,
 Men once went trudging with cumbrous flintlocks,
 Bound for a muster or training-day.

Along these roads to the springtime sowing
 With a whistle men strode in days gone by;
 Now the only music amid the stillness
 Is a hidden woodbird's grieving cry.

There, round the hearths that were home for someone,
 Cling lilacs in riot and matted grass;
 There, where the haymakers passed at sundown,
 The shy, wild shapes of the forest pass.

"SPRING COMES SLOWLY UP THIS WAY"

SPRING comes not as a gracious maid
 In those New England lands I know.
 That may have been so, long ago,
 Where Thyrsis on a syrinx played
 And goatherds danced beneath an ilex-tree
 On a bright upland near the wine-dark sea.

But Spring is here a Gothic sprite
 Of crafty wit and knavish vein,
 Who harbors mischief in his brain
 And teases men for elfin spite.
 A new-world Puck is he, whose covert lies
 Far from the smoke of farms, or prying eyes.

He whisks your choicest hat away
 Exultant at your futile wrath;
 He drops a slough across your path
 With laughter for the things you say.
 He fiercely twirls the windmill's metal sails,
 And overturns the housewife's empty pails.

When peach-buds in your orchard show,
 He pinches them with frost; next day,
 He drenches you with rain, or may
 Pelt you, perchance, with sleet or snow.
 He may sometimes unleash all three together—
 Whereat you smile, and cry, "New England weather!"

THE TALKING TREE

I CLIMBED a northward slope
 Where stalks of mullein show,
 And tufts of pasture grass,
 Above the crusted snow.

Upon the unsheltered crest
 A brave young oak I found,
 Stalk ringed with stubborn ice,
 Roots clutched by frozen ground.

Its twisted copper leaves
 It held with fondness still;
 They shivered in the wind
 That walked on the open hill.

Of the oracles they told,
 The dull wind took no heed;
 The riddles that they declared,
 I had no wit to read.

To climb the windy slope,
 Will you not go for me,
 And hark the rustle of leaves
 Upon the Talking Tree?

Perhaps you may make plain
 What those soft voices mean—
 Voices like rain in spring,
 When all the leaves are green.

MARCH MORNING

THE wind's northeast;
 The wind vane spins;
 The wind's northwest,
 And snow begins;
 Dun fields that ran
 With rain last night,
 Wear now a face
 Of wintry white.

The wind vane veers,
 The squall is done;
 The light flakes melt
 In sudden sun;

Out bursts your voice
 Of eager glee,
 Song-sparrow in
 A garden tree!

SURVIVAL

WITH Yorktown taken and freedom won,
 Barton the Armorer thought his work done;
 And so he peacefully settled down
 To moulding bells in East Hampton town.
 Sleigh-bells that came from his honest hand
 Made gay the winters of Yankeeland,
 And shook up the echoes with rattling chimes
 On moonlit nights in the good, old times. . . .

Armorer Barton, little place
 Have strings of bells in this year of grace,
 And strange to this duller age appear
 Their artless joy and old-fashioned cheer.
 But if you came back to Armory Hill,
 You'd find folk solemnly toiling still
 In shaping muskets to maim and kill.

ANGLIA NOVA

'Tis not alone that Milton's language gives
To our plain back-country speech
A flavor yet; that Hampden's spirit lives,
Beyond the Atlantic's reach,
Among these up-hill farms; nor that men drew
Our common social code
From the same fount that Prynne and Selden knew,
And to this strange abode
Transferred loved English names of long renown,
Making our sterner land
Still speak of hedgerow and of minster-town.
These things, indeed, shall stand,
And worthy voices of such themes shall sing,
As they have sung of yore.
Returning seasons other tokens bring
That I would not ignore:
From some high maple's top, a starling's call;
The soapwort's pink that lines an old stone wall.

